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SUBJECT: Goma Report October 8: Heavy Fighting in
Rutshuru; CNDP Threatens MONUC; GDRC Remains
Concerned About Imminent Rwandan Intervention

REF: Kinshasa 843

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1. (SBU) Summary: Heavy fighting erupted October 8 in the Rutshuru region. CNDP overran a FARDC brigade head-quarters near Rumangabo, apparently inflicting heavy casualties and capturing significant amounts of military equipment. MONUC told post that CNDP almost certainly initiated the fighting. MONUC has lodged formal complaints with the FARDC regarding the following: FARDC forces are actively inciting and even participating in anti-MONUC demonstrations along the Rutshuru corridor, thus hindering MONUC movements; in certain areas, FARDC has moved its troops next to MONUC positions, thus bringing MONUC into crossfire; and FARDC has initiated operations with attack helicopters without coordinating with MONUC. CNDP's Major Castro told Goma PolOff and MONUC Kinshasa that the CNDP might attack a MONUC base near Bunagana (outside of a FARDC-CNDP battle zone) should MONUC prevent CNDP troop movements to Rumangabo. FARDC, with MONUC logistical support, is preparing for operations against Ituri rebel groups. MONUC believes that a heretofore unknown Ituri group, the Union for Congolese Revolution (URC - Union pour la Revolution Congolaise), may be a CNDP creation, perhaps with support from Uganda. End Summary.

Heavy Fighting in Rutshuru Region

2. (SBU) Heavy fighting between FARDC and CNDP erupted October 8 along the Rutshuru corridor. Confrontations began early morning in the vicinities of Ntamagenga and east of Rumangabo. Both sides accused the other of starting the fighting. MONUC's Deputy Director of Political Affairs, Christian Manahl, while briefing P3+2 Political Counselors, said that CNDP almost certainly initiated the hostilities.

3. (SBU) By 9:00 am, FARDC had employed two attack helicopters, which fired rockets at CNDP positions near Rumangabo. FARDC also used mortars, and tanks were observed moving north towards Rugari, though it is unclear if FARDC used them. By 10:30, the fighting near Rumangabo had stopped, while there was sporadic gunfire through the afternoon near Ntamagenga. When the dust had settled, CNDP had overrun the FARDC's 2nd Integrated Brigade headquarters two kilometers east of Rumangabo. In Ntamagenga, MONUC forces had evacuated the area, which FARDC then reoccupied. Manahl said that CNDP had inflicted heavy casualties and had captured considerable military equipment at Rumangabo.

4. (SBU) Acting Chief of MONUC's Force Headquarters, Lt. Colonel McNight, announced that MONUC would present FARDC with three formal complaints. First, FARDC apparently incited the local population to demonstrate against MONUC, with FARDC elements even actively participating in the demonstrations. This hindered MONUC efforts to

deploy from Rutshuru to Rumangabo to confront the CNDP. Some 2,000 FARDC soldiers and their families, who were fleeing north towards Rutshuru, reportedly instigated the incitement.

15. (SBU) MONUC's second complaint was the FARDC's decision - previously taken in Kimoka and near Himbi Heights - to place its units in Ntamagenga directly next to MONUC elements, while engaging CNDP. A Uruguayan unit was therefore caught in crossfire and forced to evacuate the area, which the FARDC subsequently reoccupied. At least one Uruguayan vehicle caught fire after sustaining gunfire.

16. (SBU) The final complaint was the FARDC's decision to use attack helicopters without coordinating with MONUC. Manahl told PolCouns that a FARDC helicopter almost mistakenly attacked a MONUC position. MONUC had canceled an operation to send one of its Mi-24's to support the FARDC withdrawal because FARDC was already flying in the area. MONUC also canceled a mission to send attack helicopters to Walikale in support of Operation Kimia, as the helicopters might have been needed along the Rutshuru corridor.

17. (SBU) CNDP's Major Castro contacted Goma PolOff to explain that the CNDP actions near Rumangabo were in response to FARDC attacks in the area. Castro conceded that the CNDP might consider attacking the MONUC base at Chengerero near Bunagana, in the event MONUC forces blocked CNDP forces from advancing to Rumangabo. PolOff warned Castro that such an action would have serious consequences. Manahl told PolCouns that he had told Castro that such an attack, outside of a FARDC-CNDP battle zone, would be extremely provocative, almost certainly resulting in a robust MONUC response.

18. (SBU) In a separate incident on October 8, the FARDC's 14th Integrated Brigade and the Mai Mai Cobra Brigade engaged in a brief firefight near Bweremana between Sake and Minova. The FARDC was conducting a sensitization campaign on disengagement when a scuffle

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broke out, which escalated into a firefight. Three Mai Mai were reportedly killed. Strangely, the situation ended when approximately 375 Mai Mai combatants surrendered. They are being held in Minova awaiting transfer to a brassage center. MONUC was unclear why the situation escalated or why the FARDC was conducting a disengagement sensitization campaign independent of MONUC.

FARDC Prepares for Operations in Ituri

19. (SBU) In southern Ituri, preparations for FARDC operations against the Front for Patriotic Resistance in Ituri (FRPI-Forces de Resistance Patriotique d'Ituri) are underway. Efforts consist of securing the main supply route (MSR) southwest from Bunia into the projected area of operations. During fighting last week, the FARDC lost some 60,000 rounds of ammunition and an unspecified number of weapons. MONUC was now providing security and logistical support along the MSR. However, coordination amongst the Bangladeshi, Guatemalan, Pakistani, and Nepalese units was proving difficult. There was no immediate timeline for beginning the FARDC operations in the area.

110. (SBU) In Kinshasa, Manahl said that MONUC remains concerned about renewed instability in Ituri, particularly because MONUC and the FARDC have reduced their presence in the province to support operations in North Kivu. MONUC recently received a declaration from a heretofore unknown Ituri rebel group, the Union for Congolese Revolution (URC - Union pour la Revolution Congolaise), announcing its establishment. Manahl opined that the same people were probably associated with this group, the FRPI, and its purported successor, the Popular Front for Justice in Congo (FPJC - "Front Populaire pour la Justice au Congo")(reftel).

111. (SBU) According to MONUC officials, there are strong indications that the CNDP may be behind the URC. MONUC has ascertained that the URC document, which MONUC received, was sent from North Kivu from an individual believed to have ties with the CNDP. There are also rumors that Uganda may be backing the URC, perhaps to irritate Kinshasa because of the two countries' oil exploration dispute in Lake Albert.

